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Author, Educator Parker Palmer Helps Lawrence University Launch New Civic Engagement Initiative

Posted on: January 17th, 2012 by Rick Peterson

Renowned author, educator and activist Parker Palmer visits the Lawrence University campus Wednesday, Jan. 25 to launch the college's newest initiative, the Civic Life Project, a program designed to stimulate engagement among Lawrence students and the Fox Cities community through short, student-made documentary films about local issues.



Parker Palmer

Palmer delivers the address “Democracy, Higher Education and Habits of the Heart: Restoring Democracy’s Infrastructure” at 7 p.m. in the Lawrence Memorial Chapel. A question-and-answer session will follow his presentation, which is free and open to the public.

A traveling teacher, Palmer focuses on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality and social change. He founded the Center for Courage & Renewal in Bainbridge Island, Wash., a national non-profit organization that supports people in the serving

professions —education, medicine, ministry, law, philanthropy — through programs such as “Courage to Teach,” “Courage to Lead” and “Circle of Trust.”

Palmer, who lives in Madison, has written nine books, including “Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit,” which was published last August, “The Active Life,” “The Company of Strangers” and “The Promise of Paradox.”

A senior associate of the American Association of Higher Education for 15 years, Palmer was named one of “25 People Who Are Changing the World” in 2011 by the *Utne Reader* in its annual listing of “Visionaries.”

Palmer has been cited by the Council of Independent Colleges for “outstanding contributions to higher education,” and the American College Personnel Association named him a “Diamond Honoree” for his contributions to the field of student affairs. In 1998, The Leadership Project honored Palmer one of the 30 “most influential senior leaders” in higher education and one of the 10 key “agenda-setters” of the past decade.



Lawrence’s Civic Life Project, set to launch on a pilot basis in 2012-13, is a unique educational initiative that prompts students to participate as engaged citizens through documentary

filmmaking. It is modeled on a successful program that award-winning filmmaker Catherine Tatge and her partner Dominique Lasseur created for several high schools in Connecticut several years ago.

Tatge, who is spending the current academic year at Lawrence as an artist-in-residence, will coordinate the program in collaboration with Monica Rico, associate professor of history, Pieper Family Chair of Servant Leadership and director of the Office of Engaged Learning, and assistance from Lasseur of Global Village Media in New York City.

The program, which will be open to all students, leverages several strengths of the college: community engagement, visual and musical creativity, communication skills and research abilities.



Catherine Tatge '72

“Our goal is to encourage young people to become active participants in our democracy, to collaborate, deliberate and take the initiative to solve problems that they consider important in their communities,” said Tatge. “It centers on developing the core skills involved in producing a documentary film. In the process of researching stories and investigating all sides of an issue, students

acquire valuable tools to better understand the complex workings of our society and our democracy.”

Plans call for the first short films — 8-12 minutes in length — produced by the students participating in the project to be screened for the Appleton community at the end of the 2012-13 academic year.